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THE
MODERNIZING OF THE VEDĀNTA

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL IN CANDIDACY
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY
AND ETHICS

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By
BRYAN SEWALL STOFFER

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PREFACE

This study of the growth and modernizing of the Vedānta grew out of the writer's interest in the changes that are taking place in the thought life of modern India. Since the Vedānta in its various forms is universally recognized as supreme among India's thought systems, this study has been a natural outcome.

The title itself implies that changes are taking place. Those changes, wherever it has been possible to trace them, have been associated with the social process. The point of view and methods of social psychology in studying cultural inter-penetration have been followed. No definite theory of the social process was assumed as final. The data available for each specific phase of the study were assembled and critically analyzed in order to determine the creative elements producing the ideological structure. In the ancient and even medieval period this was exceedingly difficult since Indian scholars have never been especially interested in historical accuracy but rather in the elaboration and definition of concepts.

The Indian social process appears to be unique in that the independent and immobile village communities with caste or-

ganization and regulating dharma, and the intellectuals who produced the religious philosophy, exist side by side vitally and creatively affecting each other only infrequently until the dawn of the modern period. With the further reconstruction of social history it may be possible to establish a more frequent and more intimate relationship. This study has been an attempt in that direction.

The Vedānta is frankly recognized as a movement among the intellectuals. Two main tendencies emerge. At times the movement appears as primarily philosophical, stressing the idea of free speculation. At other times, it seems to be religious with the main emphasis upon release growing probably out of emotional dissatisfaction with existing religious ideas and practices and also out of the idea of impermanence and the transitory character of this life.

In recent centuries, the factors compelling modernization are well known. Modern science in both its pure and practical aspects, and the struggle for democracy in all realms of life, are inclusive of the most vital and creative factors interacting with traditional social processes and thought forms.

This study intends no more than to indicate trends in modernization. In fact nothing more is possible in view of the fact that three of the modern writers here studied are creatively at work.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The foregoing chapters have dealt in detail with the growth and modernizing of Vedāntic thought.¹ This chapter intends to present in brief compass the sweep of this thought and its direction in modern life.

The early hymns of the Rig Veda give slight indication of the future development. The warlike, vigorous yet free clan life, with its pantheon representing the personification of natural forces, presents the picture of a pastoral people, with their usual attitudes, customs, ideas, and institutions.

This picture changes, however, with the passing of the generations in the new land among a virile although conquered people. In the passage from a pastoral to an agricultural type of life, the growing indefiniteness in the function of the gods, the rise of the all-gods,² receding farther from the people, the increase in the number and complexity of the sacrifices and their cosmic significance,³ as well as the coalescing of the clans and the development of specialization of functions, especially in its priestly aspects, all contributed toward the development of a new outlook. The coalescing and recession of the gods, the externalizing of the sacri-

1. The complete dissertation, of which this is the concluding chapter, is to be found in the University of Chicago Libraries.

2. W. E. Clark, Unpublished notes.

3. S. Das Gupta, A History of Indian Philosophy (Cambridge, 1922), p. 22.

W. S. Urquhart, The Vedānta and Modern Thought (Oxford University Press, 1928), p. 16.

fices and the growing importance of the priests made it more difficult for religiously sensitive individuals to find emotional satisfaction in the new trends.

With the passage to Upanishadic thought the trends indicated in the Vedic period continue and other significant elements emerge. This period laid the foundations and marked out the lines of development for India's future thought. Life had become organized and stabilized in the valleys of the Jumna and the Ganges. The adjustment and fusion between the Aryan and aboriginal peoples had taken place, in the rather distant past. The creative social forces which arose produced the most important ideas and documents which India possesses in her rich storehouse of literature. Attempts of scholars to force this rich diversity into one single thought pattern have failed.¹ Pantheism, immanentism, spiritual monism and theism can legitimately claim certain passages as supporting their varying points of view.

In the evolution of the Atman-Brahman concept which was central in the Upanishads, there were two main lines of development. Through the sacrifice the idea of Brahman emerged as its inner controlling power and finally as the cosmic unity. Along with this external unification another

1. A. B. Keith, The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and the Upanishads (Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 592.

method was proving fruitful. There were those who, either because of the impermanence of the world or on account of religious dissatisfaction or both, sought to find unity in the self. Prana or vital breath and prajna of intelligence were both considered at different times as fruitful analogies of that which was most ultimate in the experience of the individual. Finally in the religious trance¹ both the unity of the individual and its identification with the cosmic unity were achieved. In and through this state of mystical intuition all physical and mental categories were transcended. The inner self or Atman realized its identity with the cosmic self or Brahman.² The experience was self-certifying yielding supreme joy and bliss.³

This method, however, yielded no logical or relational knowledge. The processes of rational knowing were admitted as valuable in describing what the Atman-Brahman was not, but they had to be transcended in the mystic trance, for only in this way could the final step in self-realization be taken. In the analytical and descriptive field negativism and silence alone were proper.⁴ Although

1. Brhadaranyaka Up., 5-14-3, 4, 6, 7. Mandukya, 7. Maitri, 6-19 and 7-11-7.

2. Chandogya, 6-8-6 to 6-18-1.

3. Urquhart, The Vedānta and Modern Thought, p. 33.

4. Keith, The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda, pp. 521-2.

spiritual monism tended to negate the phenomenal world still there was no extreme emphasis upon the ideal of transitoriness such as an illusion doctrine would necessitate.

The ideas of Karma and Samsāra further accentuated the trend toward unity. The former provided an ethical basis for order and tended to confirm the "status quo". The latter, whatever its origin,¹ increased the magnitude of the struggle and hence intensified the search for release. It also extended the idea of impermanence to infinite proportions unless and until release were realized. The net result was an increase of religious dissatisfaction among earnest and sensitive souls and a redoubled interest in new ideas and new methods of release. The free philosophical attitude was not lacking but the religious anxiety was at least equally strong. Witness Yājñavalkya deserting his devoted and talented wife Maitreyī in order to retire to the forest for meditation and concentration.

The philosophically inclined attempted to reconcile the various methods of release by subordinating Karma or the way of works of Jnana or the way of knowledge and austerity. The former led to the path of the fathers, while the latter guided its devotees through the path of the gods² until realization was achieved in the flash of intuition.

1. T. Rhys Davids, Indian Buddhism (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1882), p. 82.

2. Chandogya, Up. 5-10-1 ff.

In this highest state which was pure existence (Sat) pure intelligence (Cit) and pure bliss (Ānanda) not only logical and rational but also ethical categories were transcended. The good was given a place as a vital and necessary part of the discipline¹ preparatory to release, but along with evil it belonged to the sphere of the relative and phenomenal with no grounding in ultimate reality.

Early Buddhism presented a change of emphasis. It arose and made its greatest appeal to the rather free and democratic Kshatriya clans of the East. Brahmanism had never been so powerful in that section of the country. Buddhism in its inception represented primarily a dissatisfaction with the religious and priestly formalism and externalism of the immobile village community and with the fruitlessness of an overemphasis upon metaphysical speculation.² The salvation interest or desire for release continued to be central but a middle path dominated by an ethical emphasis replaced the extreme ascetical and the priestly approaches. The strong hold of the Upanishads, however, is revealed in the retention of monkhood and the arhat ideal. The mystic trance or enlightenment (Bodhi) remained at the summit of the pathway leading to Nirvana.

Again, the three marks of Buddhism, impermanence, no soul and sorrow³, although they at first appear to be a

1. Taittiriya, up. 1-2; also Chandogya, 8-3-4.

2. T. Rhys Davids, Indian Buddhism, p. 156.

3. W. M. McGovern, Evolution of Buddhism, pp. 4-11.

radical departure, are not so revolutionary as they seem. The relative reality permitted to empirical existence and the phenomenal world in the spiritual monism represented by Yajñavalkya, served to emphasize the idea of impermanence or transitoriness. Also the Sāṅkhya had denied the existence of the Brahman and had further developed the idea of becoming. Buddhism also, if it did not deny, at least was agnostic concerning the existence of Brahman. Its emphasis upon becoming was only more pronounced than the Sāṅkhya. Furthermore, Buddha extended his agnosticism to the Atman. The only self really known is the empirical self which is a continuous yet ever-changing complex composed of the five skandhas.¹ A never-ending chain of cause and effect, called the law of the deed, was the explanation of individual, social and even cosmic processes.

The law of Karma was for the first time fully moralized, including intent, act, and consequent approval of the deed.² It was held to be beginningless and absolutely binding but not rigidly deterministic else release would have been impossible.

The doctrine of release continued to be central in Buddha's teaching. Renunciation and meditation were

1. De la Vallée Poussin, The Way to Nirvana (Cambridge University Press, 1917), pp. 80 ff.

2. Ibid., p. 58.

retained as necessary for enlightenment. He had achieved bodhi in his own experience. That was primary and self-certifying. He appeared content to let others rationalize about it.

The world was afflicted with suffering and sorrow. The root cause thereof was tanha or craving desire. The elimination of this craving was thus for Buddha the supreme consideration. The middle path, followed by renunciation, concentration and meditation, formed the way to arrive at bodhi or enlightenment.

It is clear that Buddhism made no direct campaign against the caste system which controlled the village social organization. It was not a movement for the reformation of society but rather for the release of the individual from the bonds of Karma and Samsāra which were far more menacing. However, there were no caste restrictions for entrance into the order of monks.

Nirvana, the ultimate goal of the Buddhist, the cessation of craving and becoming probably did not signify annihilation but rather unqualified deliverance.¹

Although early Buddhism eschewed metaphysics, it was inevitable that it should eventually come under the influence of the Indian speculative spirit especially since

1. Ibid., p. 107

it retained the Muni ideal. Even in Hinayana this trend revealed itself. But it remained for the Mahayana philosophers to make it an all-absorbing pursuit. Two schools here were of vital importance on account of their similarity to the Vedānta philosophy as enunciated by its great systematizer Sankara. The Madhyamaka emphasized the single underlying flux or becoming. Beyond this there was a great transcendental reality called the Void¹ about which it was impossible to say anything, yet which permeated everything and was its ground. Concerning it silence was the only appropriate attitude.

The other school called the Yogacara might be termed an idealistic negativism. Its absolute was of the essence of mind yet ever-changing, the Alayavijnana, a repository consciousness, void yet pure thought.² Within it, as the Madhyamaka, there were proponents of both nihilism and relativism with respect to the phenomenal world. The characterization of the Absolute as void yet pure thought is the advance if any upon the Madhyamaka.

The Absolute in these systems appears non-different from that of Sankara in his extreme moments of rigid and logical monism. The logical canons of perception, inference,

1. W. M. McGovern, Introduction to Mahayana Buddhism (New York: E. P. Dutton Co., 1922).

Keith, Buddhist Philosophy, pp. 235 ff.

Kenneth Saunders, Epochs in Buddhist History (University of Chicago Press, 1924), pp. 72 ff.

2. McGovern, Introduction to Mahayana Buddhism, pp. 23, 24.

authority and the use of non-contradiction as a test of truth are also those used by the great Vedāntic synthesizer.

The doctrine of the Ātman, if they can be said to have such a doctrine, is certainly not clear. Das Gupta insists that the essence of Sankara's philosophy is a compound of these two forms of Buddhism with the doctrine of the Ātman¹ of the Upanishads superadded.

The Bhagavad-Gītā contributes but little to the Vedāntic emphasis yet it belongs to the sacred canon and as such holds an important place in Hindu thought especially among the masses. The work is clearly a syncretistic product of reviving Hinduism including element from the Upanishads, the Karma Mimamsa, the Sankhya-Yoga and the Bhagavata clans of the Maharashtra.² Its syncretism is further revealed in the three paths to realization which are here correlated for the first time in Hindu literature. The Jnana marga or way of knowledge and austerity, open to all but capable of being followed by the few harks back to the Upanishads. The Karma marga or the way of works, not new but given a recognition which it had not possessed heretofore. It clarified the path of release for the householder who performed his Dharmic duties in a spirit of disinterestedness, thus avoiding the fettering effect of deeds. It had

1. Das Gupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, p. 494.

2. L. D. Barnett, The Bhagavad-Gītā (London: J. M. Dent & Co. 1905), pp. 54-55.

the effect of sanctifying the status quo.¹

The way of Bhakti² or devotion was for the first time given equal recognition along with the older methods. This was probably the result of the rise to power of the Maharashtra clans who were adherents of the Bhagavata religion. Although included in this syncretism as one of its most vital and powerful elements it did not find theological formulation and systematic presentation until the time of Rāmānuja when it was incorporated into the Vedāntic system.

A survey of social and political conditions prior to the advent of Sankara reveals two important trends. On the one hand there was the rise and firm establishment of the theory of the Divine right of kings and hence absolutism.³ On the other society was disintegrating⁴ while rival Hindu kings contended for supremacy. If nothing more such movements would tend to emphasize the absolutist tendencies which were arising in Buddhist philosophy and also their insistence upon impermanence. The two main sources of Sankara's thought are undoubtedly the Upanishads and the Buddhist development⁵ in the Yogācara and the Madhyamaka schools. Although he vigorously refutes the contention of the

1. Bhagavad-Gītā, 2:71, 4:19-23, 1:36-44, 3:35, 18:41-47.

2. Ibid., 2:54 to 55, 14:26, 18:54-70.

3. R. Shamasastri, Evolution of Indian Polity (University of Calcutta, 1920), p. 146.

4. John Buchan, The Nations of Today--India (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1924), p. 17.

5. Das Gupta, History of Indian Philosophy, pp. 494-94, 470.

Vijñānavādins, and dismisses the Madhyamaka as impossible, still his logical method and his conception of the Absolute are quite similar.

In the Hindu lineage the direct spiritual ancestor of Sankara was Gaudapāda, a rigorous and logical monist¹ whose analogies have a decidedly Buddhistic flavor. He refused to allow the phenomenal world even a relative reality. Sankara, however, was more realistic and distinguished between objects in a dream and those presented in sense perception. To the latter he seems to have accorded a relative reality. His dominant interest was philosophical rather than religious as his two guiding principles indicate. The identity of the human and the Divine and the desire to get beyond transitoriness to ultimate reality determined the direction of his thought.

Among his concepts, the attributeless, actionless, indivisible Brahman who is Sat, Cit, Ānanda, and best expressed by silence, and the self-luminous Ātman who is pure consciousness or awareness, are of greatest importance and are identical.² Māyā or Avidya, illusion or ignorance, is both a metaphysical and an epistemological principle.³ As

1. P. D. Shastri, The Doctrine of Māyā, pp. 90-94.

2. Sri-Bhashya, 3-2-17 to 22; also 4-3-14.

3. S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy (The Macmillan Co., 1923), II, pp. 577-78.

the former it imposes limitations upon Brahman (which ultimately do not affect his nature) which result in the creation of the lower Brahman or *Iśvara*, who then creates souls and the phenomenal world, which if not illusory are only relatively real.¹ As the latter it imposes limitations upon the self so that the self does not know its real identity with the Absolute until true knowledge dawns in a flash of intuition, which is the method of realization. As a concept *Maya* or *Avidya* is inexplicable. Ethical action in this system is fruitful as a discipline but has no grounding in ultimate reality.

The extreme intellectualism of Sankara was no more acceptable to popular life and thought than Buddhist philosophy. The vigorous revival of popular theism as expressed in the *Pāñcharātra* Agamas, the *Purānas* and the *Dravida Prabantham*, and proclaimed by the *Alvars* and *Acharyas*, demanded a new synthesis.² *Rāmānuja*, emotionally impelled by this deeply religious spirit, yet intellectually inclined toward the *Vedāntic* emphasis, attempted rationally to formulate this fusion of the two elements.

Although he recognized that Brahman could be realized only in intuitional trance, still he insisted that identity

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1. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, pp. 519, 20.
Das Gupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, p. 48;
Urquhart, *op. cit.*, p. 147.
Sankara, *Sri-Bhāṣya*, 2-1-14, 2-3-6 and 2-3-30.
 2. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, II, 667.

implied relationship and that the application of the relational analogy even to the Ultimate was both legitimate and necessary. Brahman is neither actionless nor attributeless but the abode of all perfect and auspicious qualities. Both the souls and the universe are his modes or body, and exist in distinction from, yet only in relation to, Brahman, either in the causal or effected state.¹ This Supreme Lord permits evil but is in no way contaminated by it or responsible for it. He creates the universe yet since it is as lila or sport, it has no Karmic or binding effect upon Him. Karma is beginningless and souls continue in Samsara until its force is spent. Release is an act of Divine favor granted to those who through Karma and Jnāna have risen to Bhakti wherein self-realization² occurs, after which the released soul enjoys all the bliss and power of Brahman except the power of creating, sustaining and reabsorbing souls and the universe.

Other recognized Vedāntists of lesser importance are Madhva and Vallabha. The former emphasized the sovereignty and majesty of God and at the same time the real independence of souls and the universe (Dvaitadvaita).³ The latter pro-

1. Śrī-Bhāṣya, 1-2; 2-3-18, 19, 40-41.

2. Sir R. G. Bhandakar, Vaiṣṇavism, Saivism, etc. (Strassburg: K. J. Trubner, 1913), p. 54; also Śrī-Bhāṣya, 4-4-22.

3. Sir. R. G. Bhandakar, Vaiṣṇavism, etc., pp. 57-62.

P. D. Shastri, The Essentials of Eastern Philosophy (New York: Macmillan, 1908), p. 102.

N. MacNicoll, Indian Theism (H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1915), pp. 112-14.

J. Estlin Carpenter, Theism in Modern India (London: Williams and Norgate, 1921), pp. 409-14.

claimed the pure Vedānta (Suddhadvaita) wherein God, individual souls and the universe are identical, the latter two being created and reabsorbed by Him at his will and in accordance with the process of evolution and involution.¹

The long period of Muslim supremacy contributed little toward modernization. In the political sphere it intensified the emphasis upon Absolutism. In the religious realm, while it contributed to the formulation of syncretistic movements² it also compelled a solidification within Hinduism.

With the coming of the age of exploration, discovery, and commercial expansion, the modern age was inaugurated. Adventurers upon the high seas went everywhere initiating the struggle for commercial rights and privileges. In India as elsewhere commercial advantage was the primary motive. Emerging as the victor in the struggle the East India Company pursued a policy of commercial exploitations as had been practiced by the Muslims before them. Indian textile products

1. Sir R. G. Bhandakar, Vaishnavism, Saivism, etc., pp. 76-82.

Carpenter, op. cit., pp. 435-36.

Farquhar, Outline of the Religious Literature of India (H. Milford, Oxford University Press, London, 1920), pp. 313-15.

2. V. A. Smith, Akbar the Great Mogul (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), p. 165.

Farquhar, Outline of the Religious Literature of India, pp. 270, 291.

became world famous.

With the coming of the industrial revolution in England the policy changed. No longer were the textile trades encouraged in India. English factories demanded raw materials and an adequate market for finished products. Newly constructed roads and railways were necessitated by and in turn facilitated both of these movements, resulting in the economic consolidation of the country.¹

The dawning of the 20th century found India herself entering upon the industrial revolution. The movement has proceeded apace resulting in rapid urbanization in certain areas, the concentration of wealth, power, and huge populations within limited sections. This transfer of masses of people from rural to congested urban areas has produced serious social and religious disorganization. New industrial problems, the formation of worker's groups and class struggles on economic lines emerged.

The rapidity of change is being accentuated by new inventions and technology which has become a science of invention. The attitude of expectancy has crystallized into a philosophy of change in our modern world. Effective and satisfying organization and adjustment has become increasingly

1. Padmanabha Pillai, Economic Conditions in India (London: G. Routledge and Sons, 1925), pp. 13-17 ff.

difficult and social service organizations have arisen in response to the pressing need. The world war and resulting economic collapse has only served to emphasize the economic interdependence of all nations and peoples. New methods of transportation and communication are remaking the attitudes and habits of even remote villagers. The world has become a neighborhood where isolation and independence are no longer possible. Among rural populations, cooperative societies, cooperative banks, scientific agriculture and husbandry and rural reconstruction are indicative of the general trend.

In the political field, democratic and representative institutions expressing the will of the people are gaining ground. This trend is greatly retarded by the high percentage of illiteracy (about 90%) in the country. Furthermore the institution of representative government has been superimposed from above and has scarcely affected the local village units. In spite of these tremendous obstacles, reform movements, such as the introduction of electorates in 1892, the Minto-Morley reforms of 1909, the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms and the present Round Table negotiations; the disseminations of ideals of democracy and civic consciousness by missionaries, the teaching of English history and literature, and the influence of the press; and finally the Nationalist struggle, in recent years, have all tended to popularize the democratic ideal especially among the intellectuals in the cities and the

young men in the colleges.

Since the Vedānta has always been an intellectual movement, probably the most important factor compelling modernization has been the introduction of modern education into India.¹ During the second quarter of the 19th century through the combined efforts of missionary leaders, Hindu educators, government and commercial heads, English literary education and culture, conveyed through the English language as a medium, gained a permanent foothold in India and dominated educational development until the dawning of the 20th century. Only in recent years has science obtained adequate recognition, and in its practical aspects it is still languishing for want of initiative and support. However in the colleges and universities this modern scientific approach is now firmly established and is creating a revolution in the thought world.

The impact of idealistic and theological thought has also resulted in reform movements, such as the Brahmo-Samāj, Theosophy, the Deva Samāj, the Arya Samāj, the Neo-Vedāntic movements and others of lesser importance. The country is seething with new ideas and thought movements for which there is a favorable environment since India has always been tolerant in matters of intellectual belief.

Contemporaneous with these educational and thought impacts, there has been the revival of indigenous culture, both

1. Lord Ronaldshay, The Heart of Aryavarta (London: Constable & Co., Ltd., 1925), pp. 17 ff.

vernacular and Sanskrit. This movement is receiving stimulus and reinforcement from the present National political struggle.

This interpenetration and mutual readjustment of cultures on Indian soil is one of the most remarkable and significant phenomena of our day. In the intellectual realm this cultural fusion is best seen in the modern emphases appearing in the Vedānta.

Ramakrishna, the progenitor of the Neo-Vedāntic trends, possessed an esthetic and deeply religious nature. Although illiterate, his keen and discriminating mind was ever alert to receive new truth. Through the use of ecstatic trance,¹ which in his later years could be induced at will, he found emotional certification for his worship of Kālī as well as the impersonal Brahman. The uniting of these two types of religious experience through the ecstatic trance provided him with a method which was later used in achieving self-realization through both Mohammedanism and Christianity. On the basis of these experiences he stoutly maintained his conviction that all religions were paths to a realization of the one infinite God and that each devotee should follow his own path.²

He was not an intellectualist as Sankara or even

1. Romain Rolland, Prophets of the New India (New York: Albert & Charles Bain, 1930), pp. 5, 10, 23, 29, 37.

2. "Swami" Vivekananda, Speeches and Writings (3d ed., G. A. Notesan & Co.), pp. 17, 18.

Rāmaṇuja had been. His emphasis upon the purified soul and its vision appears to classify his approach as epistemological rather than metaphysical, although he formulated no theory of knowledge. Both the impersonal, undifferentiated Brahman and the active, creating, sustaining, destroying Kālī are one and the same.¹ The angle of vision alone is different. Māyā is real although at times, when in her intractable and destructive moods, not comprehensible.

His frequent and voluntary use of ecstasy, his broader religious syncretism and his emphasis upon social service, based upon the idea of identity in Brahman, constitute his variations from the earlier Vedāntic type. His self-realization of the ultimate by means of various religious paths is suggestive concerning the functioning of the ecstatic trance in religion.

There is here no attempt at psychological analysis. The fact of the experience is both primary and sufficient. It is clear that since realization came in each instance after absorption in the attitudes, thoughts and forms of these specific religions that the ecstatic trance is not associated with any specific religious approach. Furthermore, since God may be realized under any concept either impersonal, personal, or other thought form, the experience gives no knowledge about God or any other concept but only lends an emotional

1. Rolland, op. cit., pp. 50-52.

confirmation and assurance to any idea, ideal, or value which is already a part of the experiencer's thought milieu. This type of religious experience is distinctly supra-mental and appears to be accompanied in all cases by psychic qualities of ineffable joy, assurance, unity, vastness, and infinity.¹

The advent of Vivekananda marks the beginning of several new departures in the field of modernization. His emphasis upon the identity of the Ātman-Brahman; upon the four yogas as equally valid methods, suited to different natures,² yet all leading to the same goal; upon the various religions as true and legitimate paths, although some are more perfect than others and all find their summation in the Vedānta; upon the relativity of good and evil; were not essentially different from that of his Vedāntic guru except in the vigorous quality of their presentation.

A product of the university he had fallen under the spell of the modern scientific spirit and method as represented primarily by the physical sciences. Their ultimate goal was conceived to be unity in the physical field just as Indian religious science had achieved unity in the spiritual

1. A. E. Haydon, "The Significance of the Mystic's Experience," Journal of Religion, II (1922), 179 ff.

2. Vivekananda, Speeches and Writings, p. 316.

realm. The method of the former was experimental, of the latter experiential. Each was considered as equally objective and valid in its own field.¹ The scientist probably would not admit that a vague term such as experience could yield results comparable to specific and definitely regulated experiments. The method itself is a protest against such vagueness.

However, Vivekananda frankly contends that wherever a thing has been once experienced it can be re-experienced if the same conditions are present and the same methods used. In the Yogas India has worked out techniques which are just as certain and valid as those of physical science. It should be carefully noted that these techniques find their consummation in Yogic trance which yields no communicable knowledge. They are in reality not so much ways to varied types even of religious knowledge as paths leading to one end result, and one only; namely, union with God. Hence Yogic methods can never yield an increase of the quantity of religious knowledge. If the philosopher is consistent, he can hardly contend both that all relational categories are transcended and also that mystical trance yields valid knowledge.

Since the ultimate goal of both science and religion was unity; i.e., Brahman, his condemnation of materialistic tendencies in modern life was unsparing. In religious matters

1. Vivekananda, Yoga Philosophy (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1896), pp. 3-9.

each individual must follow his own path. Religious societies and religious worship were not only considered unnecessary but harmful. Yet with all his individualism, the oneness of all men in Brahman was the foundation of his ethics and his vigorous insistence alone directed the Ramakrishna Mission into social service as a necessary practical application of the Vedānta thus breaking its earlier ascetical and intellectual trend.

In the intellectual world Tagore is the most widely known of India's modern thinkers. Although cultured and highly educated, he is not a product of the colleges. Throughout his life he has remained essentially a nature-mystic. In addition to his artistic¹ temperament; his home life;² the outstanding position of his father in the Brahmo Samāj;³ his father's ideal of world renunciation; the freedom of his family in religious and social ideals; the varying thought trends in the Brahmo Samāj such as dualism, monistic theism allied to Vedāntism, and the absolute idealism of Europe;⁴ the Upanishads; the Bhakti elements in the Ghagavad-Gītā and Vaishnavism; and the free non-conforming sects of Bengal, such as the Bauls,⁵

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1. Rabindranath Tagore, Religion of Man (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1931), p. 86.
 2. Tagore, Personality (Macmillan Co., 1917), p. 170.
 3. Debendranath Tagore, Autobiography (Calcutta: S. K. Lahiri & Co., 1909), pp. 100, 106.
 4. Sittanath Tattvabhushan, The Philosophy of Brahmaisim (Madras, 1909), p. 159.
 5. Rabindranath Tagore, Religion of Man, p. 207.

were all freely mingles in his rich heritage.

Into the dominant Vedāntic thought forms he poured the fullness of his experience. The two ideas of unity and harmony constantly recur throughout his literary productions.¹ Brahman is the one Supreme Person existing in and through all creation in harmonious relationship. The human soul must not only become godlike but God. This identity is a relational one wherein individuality remains.² The term Māyā is used but only in an epistemological sense. Samsāra³ apparently is given up and Karma is interpreted as the moral law. Evil is mental error, the lesser good, the imperfect and partial adjustment to the Supreme Self. Men are free due to God's voluntary self-limitation.⁴

There is here a more adequate inclusion of the personal and the empirical in the achievement of self-realization. The idea of God is humanized. Love, sacrificial service, and creative work, leading to individual self-realization, are grounded in the ethical perfection of the Infinite.⁵ Renunciation is a discipline for a more adequate dedication to the Supreme who creates the possibility of realization in us.

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1. Rabindranath Tagore, Sādhana (New York: Macmillan, 1913), pp. 7-9.
 2. Rabindranath Tagore, Personality, p. 77.
 3. Ibid., p. 111.
 4. Rabindranath Tagore, Sādhana, p. 861.
 5. Rabindranath Tagore, Religion of Man, pp. 136, 64; also p. 73.

The modern scientific attitude and method, naturalistic because invading a new country, holds the key to future progress¹ but it cannot transcend its own logical categories and symbols. Only Yoga can penetrate into the region of the ineffable of perfect joy.²

The spirit of social service,³ and the idea of world brotherhood and international accord, although their modern genesis has been in the West, have become the universal embodiment of the Religion of Man, grounded in the Eternal wherein all life is united as in a symphony.

In Aurobindo Ghose, Neo-Vedāntism has produced one of its outstanding thinkers. He has brought to his work a mind trained in the universities of India and England. Deeply stirred by the Indian cultural revival and political aspirations, his early manhood was given in utter abandon to the political struggle in Bengal. Forced to flee from British India, he retired to Pondicherry where he has since devoted his life to an attempt at a correlation of modern science and the ancient intuitional method of India.⁴ Since he is still laboring at this task it is too early to give a final estimate.

As a Vedāntin Ghose retains the concept of Brahman as Sat, Ćit, Ānānda although not as silent and inactive.⁵

1. Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity (New York: Macmillan, 1922), p. 97.

2. Rabindranath Tagore, Religion of Man, p. 65; also p. 193.

3. Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p. 102.

4. Rolland, op. cit., p. 628.

5. Aurobindo Ghose, Essays: Ideal and Progress (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House, 192_), pp. 19, 20.

Consciousness and power, the two aspects of human evolution are reconciled in the Ultimate. Latest discoveries in evolution are considered as confirming the idea of a life and even mind principle working in and through the entire process.¹ The physical emphasis in science is approved and recognized as necessary in order to lay the foundations for higher knowledge, even of "Brahmavidya".²

The heart of his approach lies in the psychical field. Here physical and physiological trends have led to materialism. However the emergence of certain isolated facts in the fields of unorthodox psychological science such as psychic research, hypnotism, mesmerism, and occultism, is indicative of a significant trend.³ The ancient classification of waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep are compared to the modern planes of the conscious, subconscious or subliminal, and here Ghose adds another called the superconscious.⁴ Through super-eminent Bhakti in Yogic trance man is able to rise above the levels known to mental science into realization, the possession of the true self in being. Both scientific objectivity and validity are claimed for this approach.⁵

1. Ghose, Evolution (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House, 1923), p. 13.

2. Rolland, op. cit., p. 500.

3. Ghose, Evolution, pp. 22-24.

4. Ibid., pp. 24-26.

5. Rolland, op. cit., pp. 503-04.

The "Egoistic Error" is held to be the source of falsehood and untruth as well as the basis of man's chains. Evil, however, is not merely a mental construct. It is a real and necessary part of the world friction without which progress would be impossible, and of world discord resulting in a richer and more varied harmony.¹

Ghose passionately believes that a new revolution in thought and life is just ahead. This revolution will be spiritual. In the past all religions have made some contribution to the spiritual welfare of mankind, but they have not been able to spiritualize society.² All must cooperate in the new advance.

Unlike any of the preceding exponents of Neo-Vedāntism, Professor Radhakrishnan has been intimately and creatively associated with academic research in philosophy in India, and in recent years has been an active proponent of the Indian point of view in the West. He clearly recognizes that an evolution in thought and practice has taken place in India.³

Like others of his compatriots he asserts that any modern synthesis must include achieved results in both the physical and social sciences.⁴ He contends that physical

1. Ghose, Ideal and Progress, p. 23; Superman (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House, 1927), pp. 14, 21; Thoughts and Glimpses (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House, 1923), p. 13
2. Ibid., pp. 19, 20.

3. Radhakrishnan, The Hindu View of Life (New York: Macmillan Co., 1928), p. 22.

4. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, II, 770.

and biological science must assume a supreme principle as an ultimate ground and driving power in and through the evolutionary process.¹

Western psychical science with its almost exclusive emphasis upon the waking state is too limited. All modes of consciousness must be taken into account.² Ecstasy, genius, inspiration, and madness which are workings of the super-conscious mind should not be neglected. Yoga deals especially with these.³

Religious experience, which receives rather extended treatment in certain of his writings, is the response of the whole personality, the integrated self to the central Reality. It is recognized that this experience is conditioned by the perceiving mind, which in turn is modified by temperament as well as racial, historical, and social conditions. But even this intuitive experience is liable to error and must be tested by tradition, logic and life.⁴

The Yogas are included as paths to realization. In their highest flights Bhakti coincides with Jñāna and both issue in Karma or virtuous life, as the condition of self-realization or oneness with Supreme Reality.

1. Radhakrishnan, The Religion We Need (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1928), pp. 14-16.

2. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, I, 29.

3. Radhakrishnan, The Hindu View of Life, p. 28.

4. Ibid., pp. 15, 17, 25.

We do not know how this Universal Spirit works through the cosmic process but we do know that it is working and claims man's adventurous cooperation in a task which is as yet unfinished.¹ Karma is identified with the moral law and interpreted in such a way as to leave room for freedom, and even repentance and forgiveness.² In its individualistic aspect it is expressed in the four stages of life, Brahmacharya, Gṛhastha, Vānaprastha, and Sannyasa. The last stage of this life journey must be walked alone. The Sannyāsi is above social, economic, and political relations.

Although self-perfectionism is the individual goal,³ its social counterpart is a Kingdom of God, a brotherhood of men of all races and nationalities. Social reform, social solidarity, and international justice must be a part of any religion which will appeal to the modern world.⁴ Each and every religion has its own intrinsic merits and its own devotees. The Vedānta however is not a religion but religion in its most universal and deepest significance. Radhakrishnan recognizes that all religions and thought systems today must act and react upon each other. India must absorb the "culture of other peoples, only we must enhance, raise, and purify the elements we take over, fuse them with the

1. Radhakrishnan, The Religion We Need, p. 26.

2. Radhakrishnan, The Hindu View of Life, pp. 74-76.

3. Ibid., p. 90

4. Radhakrishnan, The Religion We Need, pp. 30-32.

best in our own".

Thus it is clearly evident that the forces of modernity, as summed up under the general heads of the spirit, methods, and results of modern science, both in pure research and in its practical aspects, and of the struggle toward more democratic ideals and forms in industrial, social, political, and religious living, are forcing readjustments in every phase of life and thought among all peoples. Radhakrishnan rightly characterizes the Vedāntic trend as dominated by two principles, loyalty to tradition and the search for truth.

The first important tendency has been the infusion of new ideological content into the old and revered thought forms. The impersonal or superpersonal unchanging and quietistic Brahman has been activised and more clearly related to the empirical self and the phenomenal world. That attempt at relation which is common to all idealistic philosophies, has not infrequently resulted in obscurity just where clarity has been needed. Yet underneath it all there is a definite tendency toward the personalizing and humanizing of the concept of the Absolute. This is probably most evident in a work such as the "Religion of Man" by Tagore.

The idea of identity as between the Atman and the Brahman is universally maintained but just as Brahman has found a more intimate relation to the world, so the new

approaches to the Atman tend toward a coalescing of the functions of the integrated empirical self and the quietistic, actionless Atman of the older Vedānta. This is indicated by the ascription of reality to religious experience in the process of self-realization in both Tagore and Radhakrishnan. In this connection the doctrine of Māyā has generally been considered as an epistemological concept or omitted entirely.

The concepts of Karma and Samsāra which have played such a dominant role in all phases of Indian life are reinterpreted. The former is identified with the moral law although never in a rigidly deterministic sense else release would not have been possible. For Ghose freedom is found in adjustment to the moral law, the will of the Universal. Tagore emphasizes the idea of voluntary self-limitation by the divine, while Radhakrishnan finds room for repentance and forgiveness. Samsāra although theoretically retained by all except Tagore is not stressed. Caste which for Radhakrishnan is the social expression of Karma, is greatly modified wherever retained. Both Vivekananda and Tagore have repudiated it.

Some of the most interesting modifications have taken place in the ethical field. Even where ethical action is not grounded in the Eternal, moral character and excellence as a discipline are recognized as indispensable.

Tagore definitely grounds it in the Ultimate and in doing so is much more nearly akin to Western mysticism and Western philosophical thought generally.

The second outstanding trend is the wholehearted acceptance of modern science in its physical aspects. The social and religious sciences have received only a limited recognition as yet among Vedāntic writers. But although science is recognized as one way to knowledge, it is also held that Yoga or intuition is equally valid. Ghose considers physical science as a necessary basis for further advance but contends that the occult phases of psychic science dealing with what he terms the superconscious, hold the key to further advance which must be spiritual. Even physical science cannot be adequately explained without the assumption of a superior spiritual principle as its ground. Radhakrishnan's suggestion of the incompleteness of the process and the necessity of man's adventurous cooperation therein is most significant of the thought trend.

In the field of intuitive realization and ecstatic trance India has always claimed preeminence. It appears however that there is no differentiation between different types of mysticism. The Yogic trance according to Indian thought has always been held to be supra-mental, yielding no relational knowledge, yet resulting in a feeling of unity, ineffable joy and absolute certitude.

Is the intuitional flash in which things are seen in new and fruitful relations in any way related to ecstatic trance? Rolland insists that Aurobindo Ghose is attempting to relate intuition to the knowledge process as its generative element. In the case of Yogic trance this does not seem to be possible since it yields non-relational experience only.

However there are flashes of insight, sometimes also termed inspiration, which are intuitive. Vivekananda asserts that such inspiration can be considered valid knowledge only when it coincides with reason and results in the universal good. In a similar vein Radhakrishnan deals with religious experience as an integration of the total personality, the total self, in response to the cosmic Self. This experience is self-certifying and intends reality but when such experience must be described such descriptions must be tested by tradition, reason, and life, in order to be valid as descriptive knowledge. The question may fairly be asked how this experience of the supraconscious mind which is supra-mental and non-relational can be described, and if it is the integration of the whole personality how it can be supra-mental?

The above types of religious mysticism do not seem to be related to the intuitive flash wherein an individual sees himself in relation to the cosmos or other things in some new integrative relationship or where things which have

constituted a problem are now seen in some new synthesis which may then be scientifically tested in accordance with the principles and methods of the science to which the particular experience belongs. This problem-solving or integrative type of mysticism is related to the knowledge process but it is difficult to see how the ecstatic or Yogic trance can be so related. The function of the Yogic trance seems to be the emotionalizing, for purposes of certification and assurance, of ideas and ideals already projected upon the basis of social interaction.

Another important trend in Vedāntic thought is the recognition of all religions and all religious experience as true. The Vedānta itself is not a religion but religion in its deepest and most fundamental aspects. There are differences of course among religions and in the types of religious experience but they are due to the fact that individuals differ with respect to the stage or level achieved on the path or paths leading to self-realization. Such a position logically results in individualism and religious irresponsibility and when coupled with the doctrine of Brahman is quietism. The mystical approach also reinforces this individualistic and quietistic trend.

However, in recent years distinctly social and ethical ideas have been included. This is now eloquently proclaimed

by the Ramakrishna Mission and by the emphasis upon brotherhood, social service, international justice and cooperation of men like Tagore and Radhakrishnan.

And finally Indians of practically all schools of thought insist upon the supremacy of the spiritual not merely in terms of Sat, Cit, Ānānda but rather in human values which are arising from the needs of men striving to adjust themselves to the new creative social forces. At present these values are being related to the ancient idealistic concepts. It remains to be seen whether the old wineskins will prove sufficiently elastic to contain the new wine.

Note: With the exception of the names of modern authors and the "sh" for sanskrit "s", the spelling in this dissertation follows that used in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Index Volume.

